

**Minutes of the
Northern Lights / Bayfield County Special Study Committee Meeting
1:30pm, July 12, 2023**

**Meeting was held Remotely through Microsoft Teams and in person in the lower level of the
Northern Lights Facility located at 706 Bratley Drive, Washburn, WI**

Members Present: Jeff Silbert, Mark Ehlers, Mary Dougherty, Ellen Avol-Law

Members Excused:

Others Present: Mark Abeles-Allison-County Administrator, Paige Terry-Clerk III, Carrie Linder-Bayfield County Human Services Aging & Disability Services Manager, Kellie Pederson-UW Extension Community Development Educator, Kim Mattson-Bayfield County Accountant, Michelle Stouffer-Acting Northern Lights Administrator, Brian Spielman-Former Owner of Aspen Acres, Autumn Koleski-Northern Lights Human Resources Director, Rene Eastman-Vice President of Financial and Regulatory Services for Leading Age Wisconsin

Called to order at 1:37 p.m. by *Committee Chair*, Mary Dougherty

Introduction and Welcome Remarks: Introductions were made.

Purpose Statement Review: Abeles-Allison stated that the purpose statement was reviewed and rewritten to include a more positive note at the end per Silbert's request. Dougherty read the purpose statement to the committee. The committee agreed on the purpose statement.

Minutes from June 19, 2023: Linder suggested that the sentence at the top of page three of the minutes, "Dougherty raised the question of moving the Bayfield County Health Department to the nursing home as a possible option" be changed to read "the Bayfield County Human Services Aging and Disability unit." *Motion by Ehlers, seconded by Avol-Law to approve the minutes for the June 19, 2023 Northern Lights / Bayfield County Special Study Committee Meeting as amended. Motion carried.*

1:42 p.m. – Chairwoman Dougherty moved Guest Speaker, Brian Spielman up on the agenda to accommodate his time.

Guest Speaker Brian Spielman: Brian Spielman, former owner of Aspen Acres in Hayward, gave a history of the facility to the committee. Abeles-Allison asked what actions the facility would take if an individual was unable to pay. Spielman explained that the family of the resident, or resident themselves, would be directed to connect with the local ADRC to assist with applying for other funds. Ehlers questioned how close the facility was to getting to their private pay rate by using Inclusa. Spielman stated there was a 40% difference. Silbert asked if the facility had any skilled nursing beds. Spielman replied no and explained that the facility is categorized below a skilled nursing facility. Abeles-Allison questioned if the facility had an interaction with the local government. Spielman answered that the facility did not often interact with the local government but did interact more with the Department of Health during the COVID-19 pandemic. Pederson asked if another facility in community was available as a skilled nursing

facility. Spielman stated that Waters Edge was a skilled nursing facility that is connected to the Hayward Area Memorial Hospital and is operated by the hospital. Abeles-Allison asked Spielman why he sold the facility, who the facility was sold to, and if the level of care has been maintained at the facility since being sold. Spielman stated that his focus was shifting primarily towards family and the business was functioning exceptionally well, so they received an offer to buy the facility at an opportune time. Spielman reviewed the staffing breakdown of the facility. Silbert asked about costs savings available in the market. Spielman suggested MCO negotiations. Dougherty asked if Spielman had any industry trend recommendations that Northern Lights should be looking at. Spielman replied that establishing appropriate rates is key in the success of the facility. Linder asked for more specifics regarding the dementia care numbers for the facility. Spielman reviewed the history of the memory care services in the facility. Silbert asked about the construction aspects of the building that led to its success. Spielman gave a rundown on the physical layout of Aspen Acres and stated that he would build a second building in the similar layout as Aspen Acres if they decided to build again.

2023 Financial Update: Ehlers reported that Northern Lights has received the money from the IRS for an employee retention credit in the amount of \$447, 000. Northern Lights intends to use the funds to pay off a line of credit and allocate \$142,068 to accounts payable. The facility will be paying off most of a boiler repair that was done, and the new phone system was already paid although Ehlers was unaware that the county had already allocated to pay for the new system. County funds that were designated to pay for the new phone system will be reallocated towards paying off the boiler repair. Payroll has gone up because CNAs have been hired along with an individual to help with laundry. Staff is anticipating an approximate \$300,000 shortfall as the funds being received are one-time use funds. Ehlers informed the committee that Northern Lights has still not received the funds from the State of Wisconsin. Discussion took place regarding funding sources available to Northern Lights.

Pederson recommended researching the topic of diversifying the facility's funding sources with the use of grants and researching the financial sustainable mix of public to private pay clients. Dougherty suggested the committee investigate a mix of public and private pay residents.

Public Comment: None.

Northern Lights Market Assessment: The committee reviewed the market assessment. There was general consensus that the facility should anticipate a greater demand for nursing home services and the number of available skilled workers will grow smaller.

County Collaboration Options: Dougherty stated that the committee may explore two routes for county collaboration, short-term immediate satisfaction or long-term collaborations, but the committee should focus on one route as there is not enough time to explore both. The committee discussed both options. The following collaboration options were discussed:

- Northern Lights Snow Removal – Bayfield County maintenance staff assisting with removing snow from the Northern Lights property.
- Bayfield County IT Assistance for Northern Lights – Merging the Bayfield County and Northern Lights IT systems.

- Bayfield County Meals on Wheels Program Assistance – Using the Nursing Home kitchen for preparing meals for the program.

Linder informed the committee that the Human Services Aging and Disability Section is looking at expanding to accommodate more staff and positions but stated that the courthouse space is becoming limited and does not offer the space necessary for the section's needs. The committee discussed the potential for moving the Bayfield County Aging and Disability section to the nursing home along with the possibility of renovating space in the nursing home's lower level to accommodate more assisted living residents.

Dougherty recommended not pursuing utilizing Bayfield County Maintenance staff for snow removal or merging IT systems with the county as collaboration options because the costs would be too great to the nursing home and the county staff would be stretched too thin. The committee agreed.

The committee was tasked with creating a list of collaboration options to bring forward to the next meeting.

Board Retreat, Management / Board Relations: Dougherty reminded the committee that the topic was mentioned at the previous meeting that the roles between Northern Lights staff and board members has become blurred and questioned if there are actions that can be taken to clearly separate the two bodies. The committee asked if resources were available to educate the board members on their roles. Pederson stated that UW Extension has plenty of resources that could be used to educate the board. Silbert asked if Pederson would be able to provide education materials. Pederson replied yes.

Next Meeting Topics: The committee discussed the following topics:

- Collaboration Options
- Northern Lights Board Development

Next Meeting Dates:

- Monday, July 24, 2023 at 1:30 p.m. (EOC)
- Monday, August 7, 2023 at 1:30 p.m. (EOC)
- Monday, August 21, 2023 at 1:30 p.m. (EOC)

Meeting adjourned at 3:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Paige Terry.